AMENDMENTS

In the Claims

Please amend claims 1 and 8-10 as below and cancel claims 2, 5, 6, and 11:

1. (currently amended) A protein comprising the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2~~, or a protein comprising the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2 in which one or more amino acids are replaced, deleted, added, and/or inserted, and being functionally equivalent to the protein comprising the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2~~.

2. Cancelled

3. (original) A DNA encoding the protein of claim 1.

4. (original) The DNA of claim 3, wherein the DNA comprises the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1.

5-6. Cancelled

7. (withdrawn) An antisense DNA against the DNA of claim 4 or a portion thereof.

8. (currently amended) A vector comprising the DNA of any one of claim 3[[,]] or claim 4 ~~and claim 5~~.

9. (currently amended) A transformant expressibly carrying the DNA of any one of claim 3[[,]] or claim 4 ~~and claim 5~~.

10. (currently amended) A method for producing the protein of claim 1, the method comprising culturing the transformant of claim 9 and collecting an expression product of the DNA of any one of claim 3[[,]] or claim 4 ~~and claim 5~~.

11. Cancelled

12. (withdrawn) An antibody binding to the protein of claim 1.

13. (withdrawn) The antibody of claim 12, wherein the antibody recognizes a portion of a protein comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2.

14. (withdrawn) The antibody of claim 13, wherein the antibody is a monoclonal antibody.

15. (withdrawn) An immunoassay method for measuring the protein of claim 2or a fragment thereof based on immunological binding of the antibody of any one of claim 13 or claim 14 to the protein of claim 2 or a fragment thereof.

16. (withdrawn) A reagent for detecting the mesangial cell, the reagent comprising the antibody of any one of claim 12 to claim 14.

17. (withdrawn) A method for detecting mesangial proliferative nephropathy, the method comprising measuring the protein of claim 2 or a fragment thereof contained in a biological sample and comparing the measured value with that obtained from a normal sample.

18. (withdrawn) A transgenic nonhuman vertebrate in which the expression level of a gene encoding Meg-3 is modified.

19. (withdrawn) The transgenic nonhuman vertebrate of claim 18, wherein the nonhuman vertebrate is a mouse.

20. (withdrawn) The transgenic nonhuman vertebrate of claim 19, wherein the nonhuman vertebrate is a knockout mouse in which the expression of a gene encoding Meg-3 is inhibited.